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The situation in the Middle East

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Letter dated 3 March 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter regarding the uprooting of 370 cherry and apple trees belonging to the Syrian citizen, Majed Fadel-Allah Abou-Awad on 23 February 2008 by Israel, the occupying Power (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 17 and 32, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 3 March 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

3 March 2008

Israel continues to occupy the Syrian Golan in a manner contrary to the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter and in violation of the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The continuing Israeli violations of the resolutions of international legitimacy and of international laws, customs and covenants, including international humanitarian law, are common knowledge; not content with its violations of the human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Golan, the Israeli Government has now gone on to include damage to the environment and to the means of livelihood of the Syrian population of the Golan. In that context, on 23 February 2008, the Israeli occupation authorities uprooted 370 cherry and apple tree seedlings in the occupied Golan which belonged to the Syrian citizen Majed Fadel-Allah Abou-Awad, a resident of the occupied Syrian village of Buq'ata, in an attempt to alter the demographic character of the Golan and to affect the commitment of the population to their territory and their homeland.

The practices of the Israeli Government in the occupied Golan, specifically in connection with the uprooting of trees, are not new but are a systematic and long-standing policy. On an earlier occasion, on 27 September 2007, they uprooted 150 cherry tree seedlings belonging to Salim 'Uwaydat, a Syrian resident of the occupied village of Majdal Shams. In holding the Israeli authorities, as the occupying Power, fully responsible for the material and moral injury inflicted on Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan as a result of the aggressive Israeli violations, we call on the international community and the United Nations to assume their responsibility to exert pressure on Israel to cease these practices which are incompatible with the Fourth Geneva Convention and with Israel's responsibilities as the occupying Power.

The delegation of my country appeals to you, and through you to the United Nations and its competent bodies, to prevail on Israel not to repeat such practices, which are contrary to the most elementary international laws, covenants and customs.

The delegation of my country requests that this letter be circulated as a document of the United Nations.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative